

GREAT RIVER STATE TRAIL  
MASTER PLAN CONCEPT ELEMENT



Property Task Force

Approved By: NRB

Leader: - Michael Ries - Park Planner  
Allen Middendorp - Park Supt.  
Black River and La Crosse Area  
Land Agent, Forestry, Wildlife  
And Fisheries Staff

Date: 5/29/06

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

MADISON, WISCONSIN



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION I - ACTIONS		<u>Page</u>
A.	GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS	1
B.	RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM	1
C.	MAPS	
	Figure 1 - County Locator Maps	
	Figure 2 - Trail Development Plan	
SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA		
A.	BACKGROUND INFORMATION	7
B.	RESOURCE CAPABILITIES AND INVENTORY	8
C.	MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS	10
D.	RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATIONS	11
E.	ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES	11
SECTION III - APPENDIX		
A.	STATUTE 23.091	
B.	MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT	

## SECTION I - ACTIONS

### A. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

#### Goal

To make available a 22-mile long state recreation area trail for year-round use, which will provide two-way traffic for bicycling, hiking, snowmobiling, and cross-country skiing, as well as hunting in specific areas during specified periods of time, and to conserve the resource for present and future generations.

#### Annual Objectives

1. Provide a trail to accommodate 50,000 bikers.
2. Provide winter use opportunities for 20,000 snowmobilers.
3. Provide winter use opportunities for 2,000 cross-country skiers.
4. Provide opportunities for 1,000 hikers.
5. Permit 8,000 participants days for small game hunting and trapping and deer hunting.
6. Maintain several important remnant prairies including the Midway Prairie Natural Area.

#### Additional Benefits

1. Provide a year-round, off-road trail which will connect to the La Crosse River Trail, Elroy-Sparta Trail, Wisconsin bikeway system, and to adjacent communities along the right-of-way. The Elroy-Sparta, La Crosse River, and Great River trails eventually will be linked together when the short connections are made. When connected the trail system will total about 77 miles.
2. Accommodate an estimated 5,000 to 10,000 user days for such activities as berry picking, birdwatching, general nature study, and fishing in streams which are crossed by the trail.

### B. RECOMMENDED MANAGEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

It is recommended that the grade be classified as a state recreation area with a full complement of trail facilities. Surfacing, planking and railing of the bridges, and rest stops at major access points will be provided. In addition, small rest areas may be constructed along the trail as needed. Once the trestles are decked and railed, portions of the trail will be opened for hiking, nature study, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. Bicycling will be allowed after the limestone surfacing is laid down. Hunting and trapping will be allowed during the regular open hunting and trapping seasons. If conflicts develop, specific geographic and time zones for hunting, trapping, and other uses will be implemented and provided for in Section 23.091 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. For example, hunting could be allowed only in those area within and/or adjacent to public hunting areas.

The ultimate goal is to develop the trail corridor into a safe, enjoyable facility for public use. Development will include decking and railing the trestles, surfacing the trail with an 8-foot wide layer of finely crushed limestone, and providing parking lots and rest area facilities near Onalaska, Midway, Lyttles Landing, and Trempealeau. The facilities for these rest areas could consist of parking lots for 20-50 cars, toilet facilities, drinking water, picnic tables, bike racks, grills, signing, and other related facilities. Where offered, municipal facilities will be utilized. It is expected that Perrot State Park will serve as one of the major beginning and ending points for the trail's northern reaches. The park provides camping and other recreational facilities which could be used by trail patrons.

The trail will terminate at the entrance road to the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge located north of Perrot Park. It is anticipated that the refuge roadways will be utilized to extend the trail from their entrance road to Highway 35. Highway 35, in turn, would provide a wide asphalt shoulder for bike use which extends all the way to Alma.

#### 1. Development (Figure 2)

Development needs of the trail over the next ten-year period have been identified and placed into three development phases.

##### Phase 1

The first phase of development will focus on preparing the trail for public use. Decking and railing of trestles, and placement of the limestone trail surface will take place. In addition, the trail will be marked with stop signs alerting users of public road crossings. Caution signs will also be erected on public roadways to alert motorists of the trail's crossing. Rocks, old ties, diseased and dead trees, shrubs, and any remaining debris will be removed from the corridor if found to have an impact on the intensive recreation area of the trail. In addition, fencing will be installed on a priority basis in accord with the Department's fencing policy. Finally, as funds permit, 20 to 50 vehicle parking lots will be constructed in areas in or near Onalaska, Midway, and Trempealeau. In addition, a small parking lot and boat access will be provided at the Lyttles Landing area. Riprap will be placed at the base of trestle abutments and along trail sections where erosion control work is needed.

##### Phase 2

The second phase of development will make the trail more convenient and enjoyable for public use. Rest areas will be developed in conjunction with parking lots constructed during Phase 1. These sites may include toilets, wells, information signs, tables, refuse cans, and other site furnishings. Landscape planting will also take place to provide shade and beautify the rest areas. Selective vegetative clearing along the trail corridor and restoration of prairie areas will accentuate the diversity of plant cover and increase visual diversity. Interpretive signs will also be placed at key locations along the trail to describe the area's natural

features. Additional riprap to guard against or correct erosion along the trail corridor may also occur during this phase. Fencing will be constructed as needed.

### Phase 3

Phase 3 will entail additional fencing, signing, furnishing rest areas, selective vegetative management and planting, and continued erosion control as needed. Such action should safeguard the resource, and guard against potential user-property owner conflicts.

Of the total trail development cost estimated at \$475,000, \$280,000 is currently budgeted for several projects underway which includes planking and railing the bridges from Onalaska to the federal wildlife refuge and surfacing from Onalaska to Lyttle's Landing. \$210,000 of the \$280,000 is federal Great River Road funds and the remainder or \$70,000 is ORAP. All remaining development, such as signing, fencing, and rest areas with parking, drinking water and toilets, will be dependent upon available funds and statewide priorities.

Areas proposed for major development will be examined for the presence of endangered or threatened wild animals and plant species. If any species are found, development will be suspended until the endangered and nongame species coordinator is consulted, the site evaluated, and appropriate protective measures taken. Prior to any major ground disturbing activities within the trail right-of-way, the Department will consult with the State Historical Society to determine whether archaeological and/or historical testing is warranted.

## 2. Management

### a. Facility Management

Currently, the trail is managed by the Perrot Park Work Unit. Primary maintenance and law enforcement responsibility will be borne by the property superintendent and other Department personnel. Additional staff needed to manage the trail once it becomes fully operational will include one 8-month seasonal employee and two limited-term employees (LTE's) to be stationed at Perrot Park. Equipment and repair facilities at Perrot will be used in conjunction with trail operations.

A non-profit organization, composed of people from villages along the trail, may be formed to provide bicycle rental and pickup, refreshments, lodging, and other services and amenities to trail users. Such a group could be stationed at Onalaska or Trempealeau.

The trail is designated as a state recreation area as authorized under Statute 23.091. Under this classification, the trail will be managed to provide a full range of recreational and educational opportunities including deer and

small game hunting and trapping. Use zones will be established with rules adopted to control activities within these specific zones. A limit on the number of people who can use any particular zone could also be established if needed.

The property will be managed under the provisions of Wisconsin Administrative Code 45 which contains rules of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources pertaining to the conduct of visitors at state parks, state forests, and other properties under the jurisdiction of the Department.

At the present time, the La Crosse River Trail terminus (Medary) is separated by a distance of approximately 2 miles from the beginning point of the Great River Trail in Onalaska. In order to connect these two trails, it will be necessary for the local units of government to designate a trail within the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska. The corridor may follow existing roadways, pedestrian ways, and/or old railroad corridors. Planning between the Department and these local units of government and agencies continues.

Village of Trempealeau officials have recommended that the trail be routed onto village streets as it passes through Trempealeau to maximize trail user contact with various businesses. The trail will be rerouted taking the recommendations into consideration. The Memorandum of Agreement (copy in Appendix) signed by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Department of Transportation states that the DNR must provide a continuous recreational trail throughout the length of the project. Therefore, a written agreement with the village on various items like signing, sign maintenance, and bike route tenure on village streets is recommended and will be completed.

Approximately 2.5 miles of rail corridor west of West Prairie Road will not be used for trail purposes because the railroad bridges over the Trempealeau and Pine Rivers have been removed and the cost to replace them is prohibitive. An agreement will also be reached with the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge management to provide trail continuity through the refuge and provide a connection to the Highway 54/35 bike route.

b. Vegetative Management

Vegetative management is needed to promote and, in some cases, control tree and shrub growth. In addition, remnant prairies and lowland areas are to be maintained. Improvement of the trail's grassland and prairie areas will maximize wildlife habitat. Controlled burning may be prescribed on the trail to control woody vegetation and maintain prairie species.

A narrow strip of vegetation on either side of the surfaced trail tread will be controlled by mowing. Other vegetated areas along the right-of-way may be managed to provide the trail users with vistas of the rivers, bluffs, and surrounding landscape.

If developments within sight of the trail occur which reduce aesthetic value, planting of native species will be incorporated on the trail right-of-way to screen such objects.

Since a complete biological inventory of the trail does not exist, it is recommended that an inventory be conducted as funds permit or through the volunteer efforts such as that which might be provided by the university system.

c. Wildlife Management

It is recommended that a number of wood duck nesting boxes be erected in suitable habitat along the trail. These would be placed primarily within the area composed of the lowland marsh. Selective brush management will be undertaken to improve food and cover for songbirds. Public hunting will be allowed between the area roughly bounded by the northern limits of Midway and Highway 93 east of Trempealeau. This area will be patrolled and carefully evaluated to determine if any user conflicts arise. Sufficient signing will be placed to notify potential trail users that the area is open to hunting and that trespassing onto private property is illegal. If problems occur, the huntable area may be reduced to that adjacent to public hunting grounds.

Little furbearer management will be possible within the right-of-way as most wetlands are connected to private property or are adjacent to federally controlled lands. Beaver populations will be controlled as needed to minimize damage to adjacent private lands. Periodic controlled burns will improve the quality of the prairie remnants and ensure pleasing aesthetics and good wildlife cover. Implementation of the preceding items will be coordinated between wildlife management and the park staff.

d. Fish Management

There are very few water courses located within the project boundary due to the narrow (100-foot width) and lineal configuration of the trail corridor. Management, therefore, will be very limited. Fishing access will be provided where the trail crosses streams and by a public carry-in boat and canoe access at Lyttle's Slough. This facility will also provide parking for hunters and trappers in the fall.

3. Land Acquisition

In March 1984, the Natural Resources Board approved acquisition of the rail line between Trempealeau and Onalaska as an extension of the existing La Crosse River Trail (Great River Section) with that trail's acreage goal being increased to 665 acres. It is proposed that these two trails be identified as separate entities for development, operations and maintenance purposes, as well as to



clarify the facility's location for the general public. This will result in the acreage goal of 265 acres for the Great River Trail and a 400-acre goal for the La Crosse River Trail.

North of Onalaska a small reversionary parcel covering one half the width of the trail right-of-way will be purchased from a willing seller as it becomes available.

The trail will be rerouted through the Village of Trempealeau on village streets, however, the Department will retain ownership of the rail corridor right-of-way in the village, 33 feet in width, for future trail development.

Because the railroad bridges over the Trempealeau and Pine Rivers were removed and the cost to replace them is prohibitive, the north 2.5 miles or 24.25 acres of rail corridor will be declared surplus. It will be sold through sealed bids or exchanged with the U.S. government for lands they presently own within Perrot State Park. Under terms of the Memorandum of Agreement, the Department of Natural Resources will refund the Department of Transportation for lands disposed of that were purchased with Great River Road funds.

There are a number of leases which were transferred to the Department with the sale of the railroad grade. The Department will continue these leases and, on a case-by-case basis, evaluate the potential of selling the leased land in those instances where a business or other building is located on such lands.

#### 4. Operation Cost and Revenue Potential,

It is estimated that approximately \$32,000 per year will be needed to operate the trail. This includes salary for an 8-month seasonal for Park Ranger 1 and 1680 hours of LTE labor. It also includes mileage and cost for a maintenance vehicle, travel, services, and supplies. It does not include ongoing maintenance. Once the grade becomes fully operational, a user fee will be charged for bicycling on the trail just as is the case on other state trails.

Based on experience gathered at other trails statewide, it is anticipated that the trail will not generate 50% of its operating costs.

#### 5. Public Involvement in the Master Planning Process

There have been dozens of contacts with private individuals, groups, agencies, local units of government, and political representatives since this project was first discussed in 1979. Since early 1984, a number of meetings have been held with various local government officials, village boards, adjacent landowners, and other interested parties through a series of public meetings and personal contacts. A public meeting was held in January, 1986, as part of the standard 45-day review process. Thirty citizens were in attendance.

- 
- LEGEND**
- STATE PARKS
  - STATE FORESTS
  - ... STATE TRAILS
  - INCLUDED IN ICE AGE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC RESERVE
  - ▲ RECREATION AREA
- 11**
- 1 Assorted
  - 2 Pecatonica
  - 3 Buffalo River
  - 4 LaCrosse River
  - 5 Military Ridge
  - 6 Cottage Grove-Waukesha
  - 7
  - 8
  - 9
  - 10
  - 11

7/84

	U.S. STATE
Nearest County	
Nearest County	COUNTY
Business	
Grade	
Grade	
Foot Road	
Foot Road	
Business Route	
Freeway	
Interchange	
Highway Separation	
Interstate Highway No.	
U.S. Highway No.	41
State Highway No.	18
County Map Letter	A
Reserved	
Open	2
State Boundary	
County Boundary	
Cost Time Boundary	
Corporate Limits	
Art & State Power	44
Airport	
Gas Station	
Gas Farm	
County Seat	
University, College	
School	
Hospital or Health Center	
Public Health or Health Center	
Range Station	
Public Camp & Picnic Area	
State Park - Open Campsites	
State Park - Picnic Facilities	
County Park - Open Campsites	
County Park - Picnic Facilities	
Wildlife	
Wildlife Preserve	

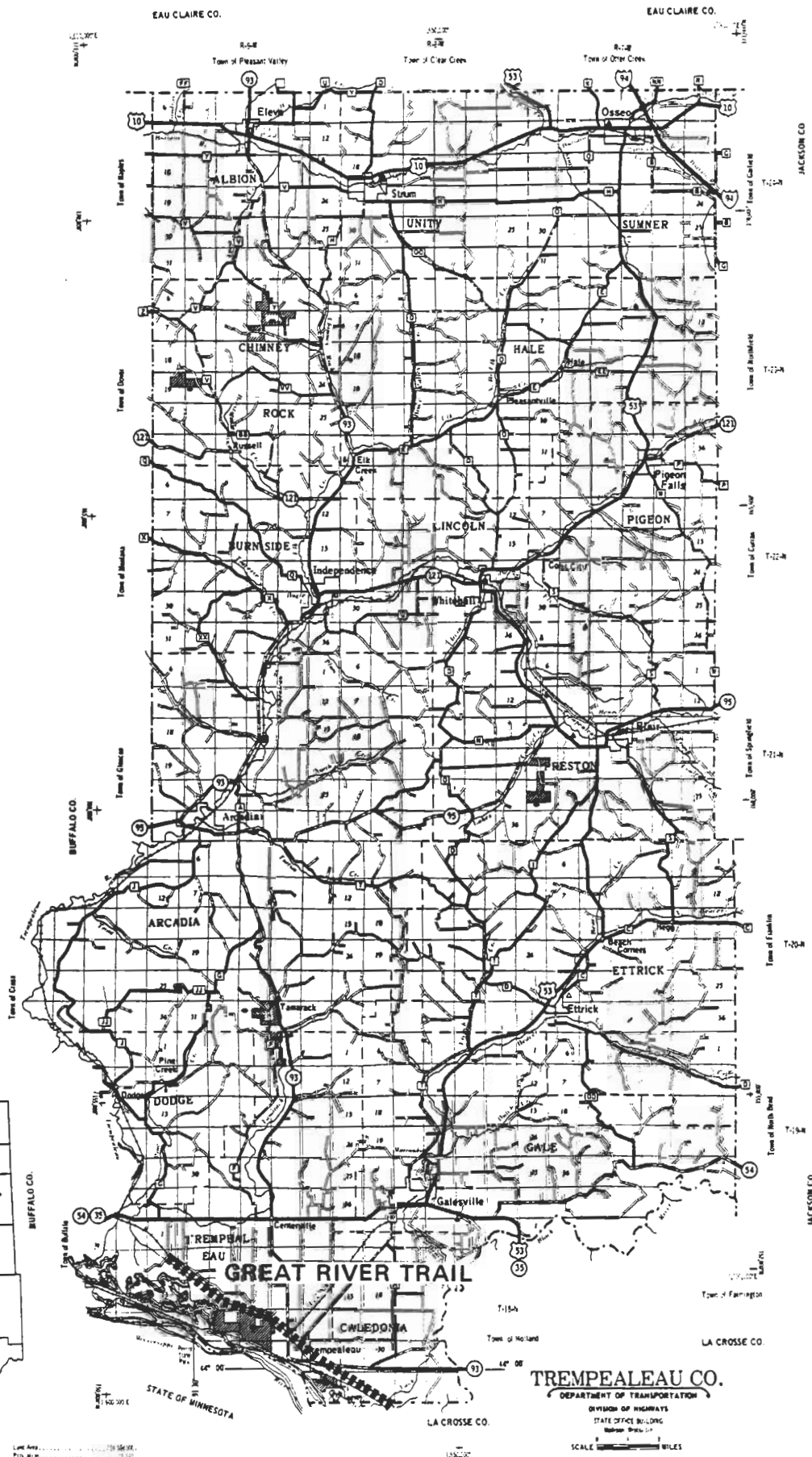
\*Surface Route on State maps and atlases



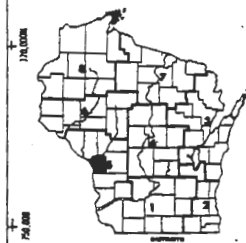
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7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36

MILES OF HIGHWAY  
as of Jan. 1, 1977

STATE .....	178
COUNTY .....	291
LOCAL ROADS .....	623
OTHER ROADS .....	9
TOTAL FOR COUNTY .....	1311



## LOCATOR MAP



T-18-N  
TREMPEALEAU CO.

Town of Caladonia

STATE OF MINNESOTA

U.S. Survey Range 5th

GREAT RIVER TRAIL

CAMPBELL

T-16-N

R-6-W

T-15-N

STATE OF MINNESOTA

VERNON CO.

R-7-W

R-6-W

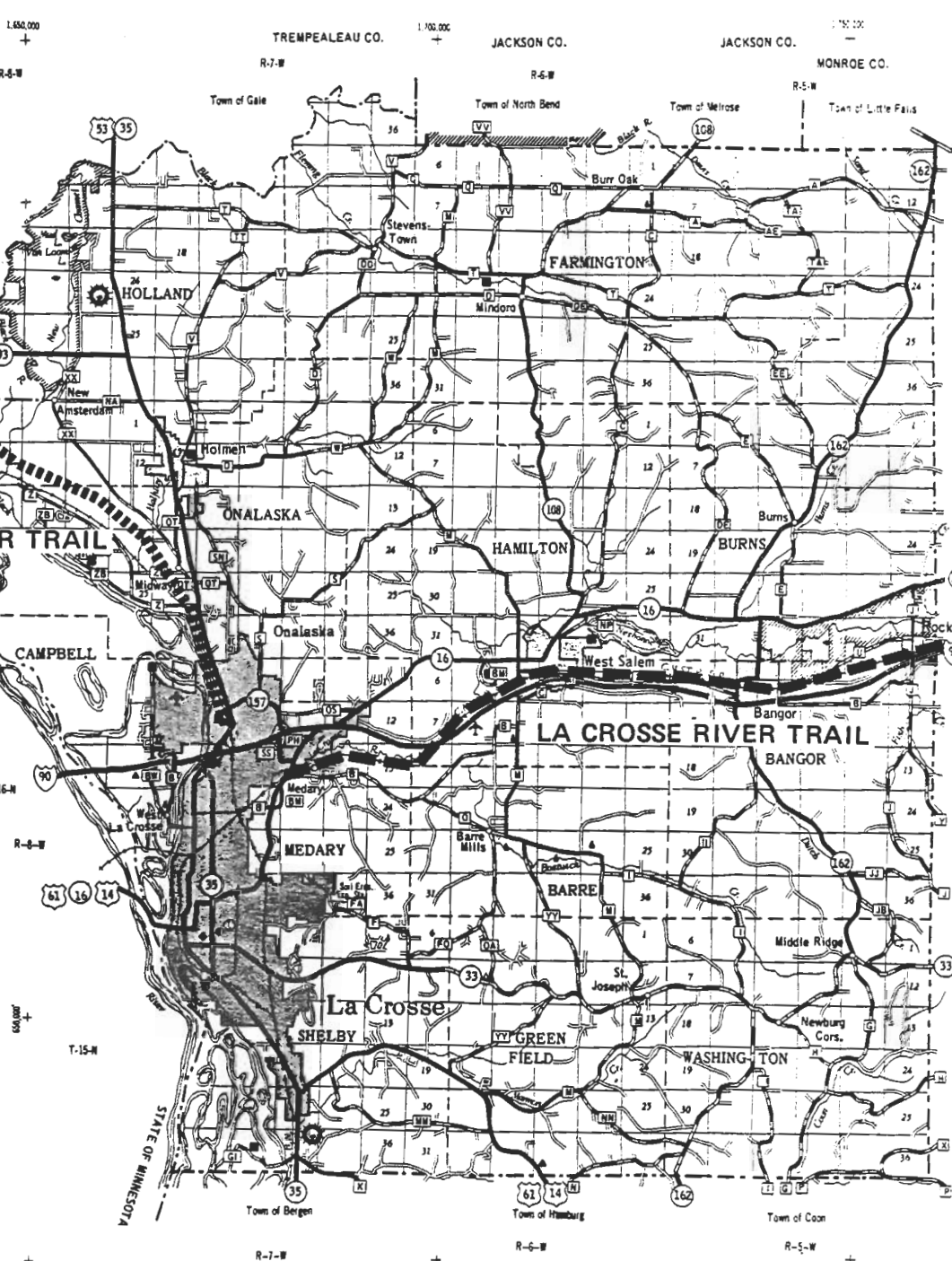
R-5-W

R-5-W

R-5-W

R-5-W

R-5-W



- LEGEND**
- Portland Canal
  - Black Creek
  - Ground
  - Earth
  - Team Road
  - Fire Lane
  - Highway Divided
  - Freeway
  - Interchange
  - Highway Separation
  - Interstate Highway No.
  - U.S. Highway No.
  - State Highway No.
  - County Hwy. Letter
  - Railroad
  - Dam
  - State Boundary
  - County Boundary
  - Civil Town Boundary
  - Corporate Limits
  - Nat. & State Forests
  - Airport
  - Fish Hatchery
  - Game Farm
  - County Seat
  - Unincorporated Village
  - Schools
  - Public Hunt or Fish Gnd.
  - Hospital
  - Religious Station
  - Public Camp & Picnic Gnd.
  - State Park
  - County Park
  - Wayside
  - Great River Road
  - Wisconsin State University

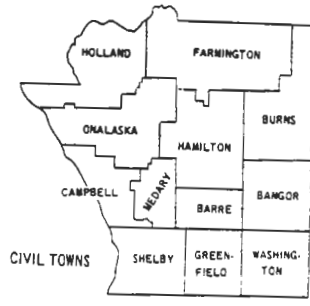
**STATES OF HIGHWAY**  
as of Jan. 1, 1983

STATE	156
COUNTY	28
LOCAL ROADS	624
OTHER ROADS	3
TOTAL FOR COUNTY	1080

Land Area 463 Sq. Mi.  
Population 41,256  
County Seat La Crosse

**TOWNSHIP NUMBERS**

6	5	4	3	2	1
7	8	9	10	11	12
18	17	16	15	14	13
19	20	21	22	23	24
30	29	28	27	26	25
31	32	33	34	35	36



**LA CROSSE**  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Madison, Wisconsin

SCALE 0 1 2 MILES

Corrected for  
JAN. 1984

Compiled from U.S.G.S. Quadrangles  
Based on Aerial Photographs



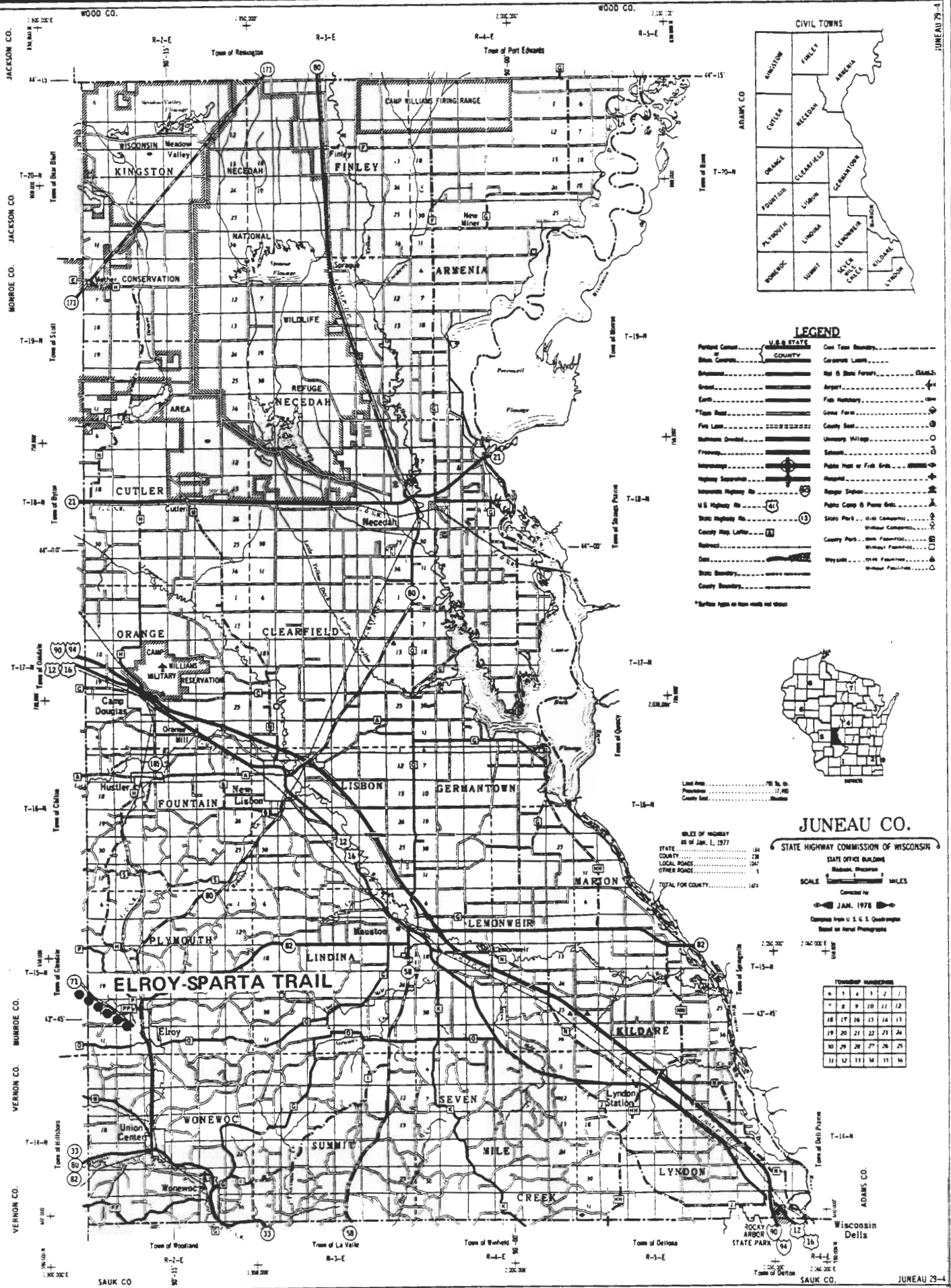
## \* Further input on time needs not shown

Football Numbers						
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8	2	9	10	11	12	
13	14	15	16	17	18	
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25	26	27	28	29	30	
31	32	33	34	35	36	

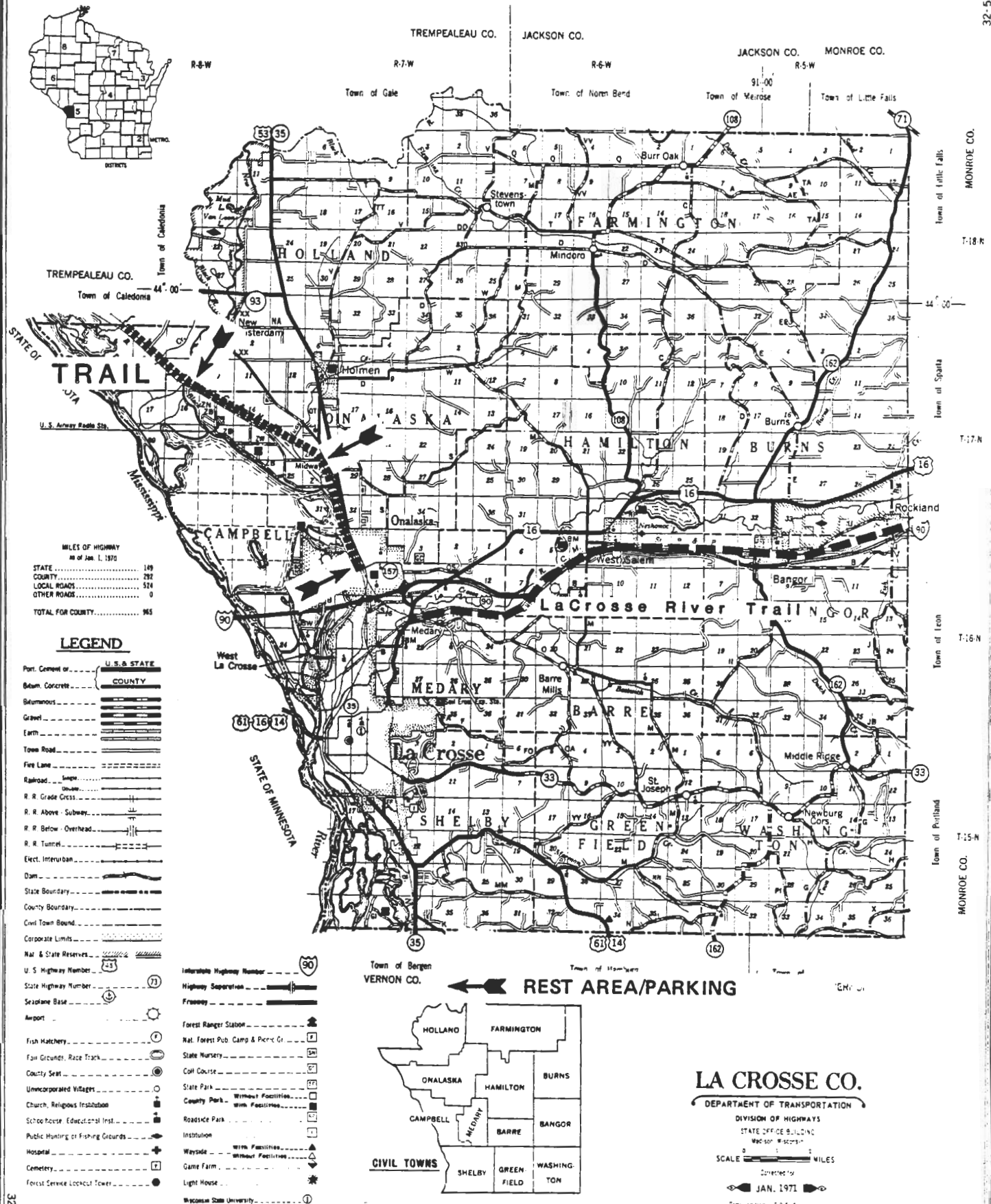
THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS HEREBY CERTIFIES THAT: (a) THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN THIS REPORT IS TRUE AND CORRECT; AND (b) THE REPORT DOES NOT CONTAIN ANY UNTRUE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION.

המחיר: 100 ₪





# GREAT RIVER TRAIL



DEVELOPMENT MAP Figure 2

# LEGEND

- Portland Cement
- Black Cement
- Gravel
- Brick
- Coal
- Track Road
- Fire Lane
- Barbed Wire
- Frontage
- Interchange
- Highway Separation
- Interstate Highway
- U.S. Highway
- State Highway
- County Road
- Railroad
- Ditch
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Coal Town Boundary
- Corporate Limits
- Int. & State Forest
- Airport
- Post Hatchery
- Cattle Farm
- County Seat
- Unincorporated Village
- Settlement
- Public Road or Path
- Hospital
- Ranger Station
- Public Camp or Place
- State Park
- County Park
- Vegetable



1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
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STATE ..... 176  
 COUNTY ..... 291  
 LOCAL ROADS ..... 63  
 OTHER ROADS ..... 9  
 TOTAL FOR COUNTY ..... 1201



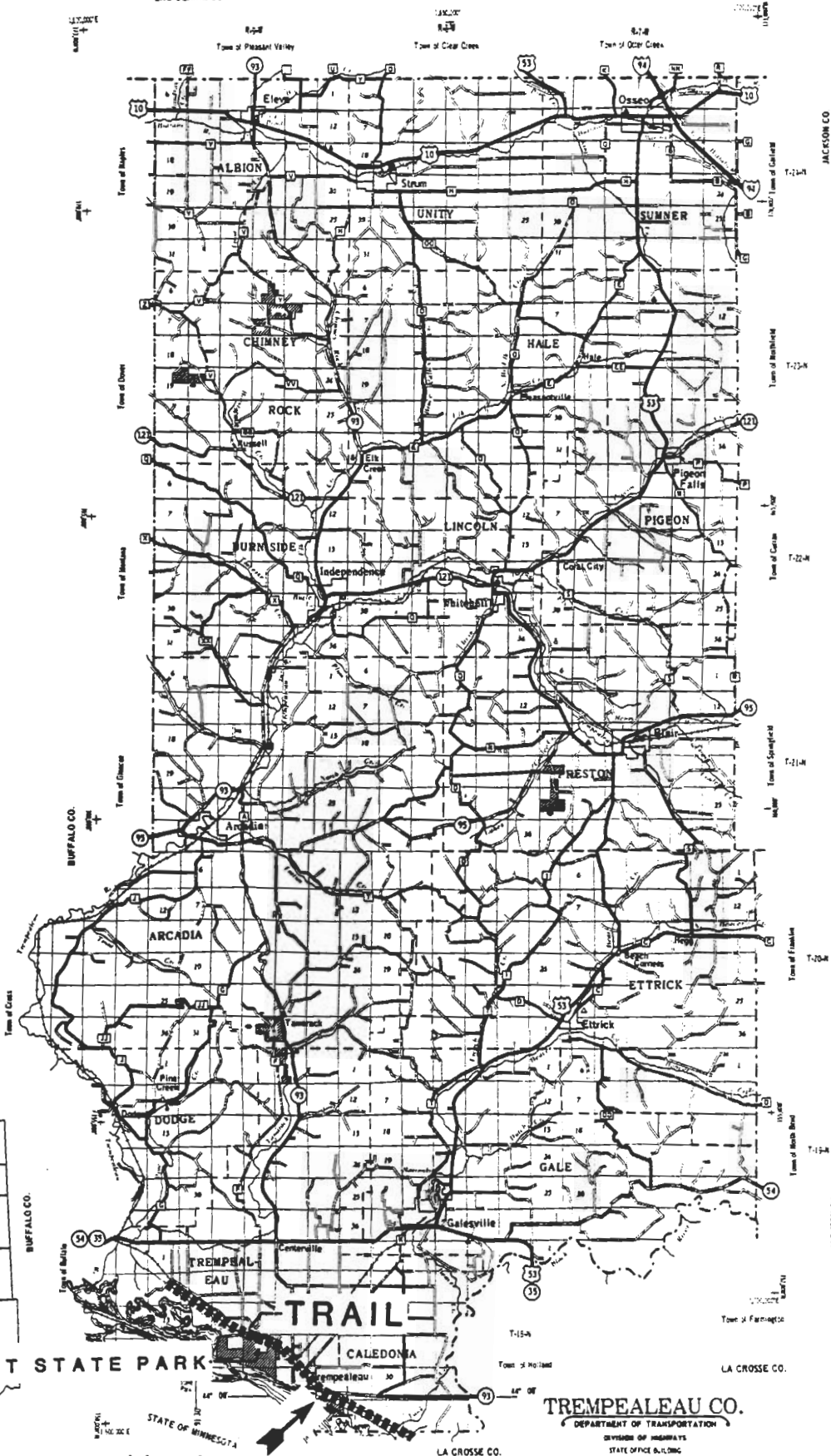
PERROT STATE PARK

parking lot

Long Ave. ..... 1/4 mi.  
 Park Ave. ..... 1/2 mi.  
 Court St. ..... 1/4 mi.

EAU CLAIRE CO.

EAU CLAIRE CO.

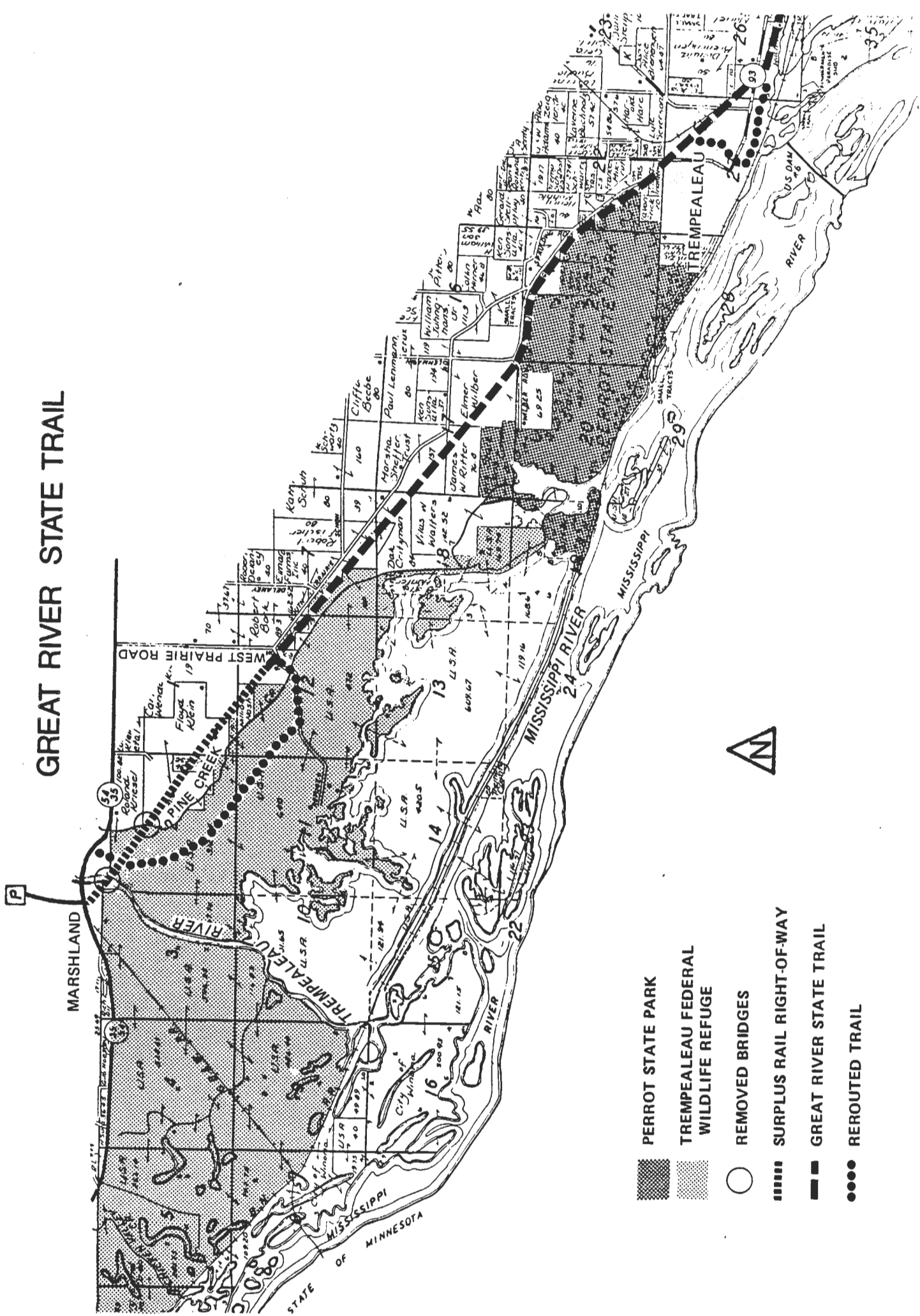


**TREMPEALEAU CO.**  
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
 STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
 Madison, Wis.  
 SCALE ..... MILES  
 JAN. 1978  
 Copyright 1978 U.S.G.S. Questionnaire  
 Send for Map or Photograph

TREMPEALEAU 615



# GREAT RIVER STATE TRAIL



The environmental assessment dated 1/25/84, which covers acquisition and development of this grade as an extension of the La Crosse River Trail, has received public review and has been certified as being in compliance with WEPA.

## SECTION II - SUPPORT DATA

### A. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### 1. Location (Figure 1)

The trail is situated on a north-south axis in west central Wisconsin within La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties. Beginning at Irvine Street in Onalaska, the grade proceeds northwesterly from the La Crosse/Onalaska metropolitan area (est. population 80,000) to Midway (unincorporated) and then to Trempealeau (population 956). From Trempealeau, the trail proceeds to its terminus at a township road which leads into the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Area. Total population within a 1-1/2 hour drive of the trail exceeds 2 million people. Major access to the trail is provided by Interstate 90, US 35-54, and Highway 93. Secondary access is provided by county and township roads.

#### 2. History of the Area

The railroad grade was constructed in the mid to late 1800's. The line was used by the Chicago-Northwestern Railroad to service the trade, factories, and agricultural needs of the region. Little else is known about this specific railroad grade and what impact it had on the area.

#### 3. Chronology of Property's Establishment & Development

The Natural Resources Board gave preliminary approval to acquire the railroad grade on March 29, 1979. The Natural Resources Board approved the acquisition of the grade at their February, 1984 meeting. At that time, the grade was identified as an extension of the La Crosse River Trail. An environmental assessment covering the acquisition and development of the grade was approved in January, 1984.

The Great River Trail corridor was purchased from the Department of Transportation, June, 1984. One-fourth of the acquisition cost or \$42,453 was paid with ORAP bonding monies, and the balance (\$127,359) with Federal Great River Road funds.

#### 4. Past and Present Management Activities

Upon assumption of ownership, the Department closed most of the grade to public use. It will remain closed until the first phase development, including decking and railing the trestles, and general clean-up is completed. At least a portion of the work is expected

to be finished by the fall of 1986. The Perrot Park Work Unit leader, stationed at Perrot State Park, is responsible for management of the trail.

A Memorandum of Agreement signed in 1984 between the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the Department of Transportation (DOT), transferred portions of the railroad right-of-way to the DNR. Per the agreement, DOT will retain ownership of the rail right-of-way at all public highway crossings. In addition, should DOT lands conveyed to the DNR be needed for future highway purposes, they can be used by DOT providing that DOT makes a satisfactory replacement of land or trail facilities for the DNR.

## B. RESOURCE CAPABILITIES AND INVENTORY

### 1. Geology

The grade lies in the unglaciated portion of west central Wisconsin. The area is characterized by lowland and sandy plains, surrounded by the steep bluffs and gorges of the Mississippi, La Crosse, and Black River valleys. The lowland is generally level with cuts and fills located predominantly in the lower rolling area between Trempealeau and Midway. Distant bluffs, with their exposed rock faces and vegetative cover, are visible from nearly all points along the grade.

### 2. Soils

Soils in the vicinity of the grade within La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties include silty and sandy soils (mostly Plainfield and Sparta soils). Some wet poorly drained bottomland soils such as alluvial sands, and marshland are located along stretches between Midway and Trempealeau. Dickinson-Gotham-Sparta association soils, which are excessively drained to well drained and have a subsoil of loamy sand to fine sandy loam over a fine to coarse sand on river terraces, are located between Trempealeau and the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Area. The abandoned rail line is located on a grade composed of rock and cinder ballast.

### 3. Climate

The climate is continental with large annual temperature range and numerous short period temperature changes. The average growing season is 164 days. The average date for the last frost in spring is April 29, and the first in autumn is October 10. Prevailing winds are from the northwest in winter and from the south-southwest during the spring, summer, and fall. The average amount of sunshine is 56% with the maximum amount being received in July. The average yearly precipitation is 29 inches with the largest percentage occurring during the 5-month period May through September.

#### 4. Water Resources

Lake Onalaska and the Mississippi River are visible from the grade near Onalaska. Halfway Creek is crossed one mile north of Midway. The Black River and Shingle Creek are crossed five to six miles north of Midway. Lakes with state and federal frontage are located just south of Trempealeau and are in close proximity to the grade. Main aquifers in the area are upper Cambrian sandstone and alluvial sands and gravels. Groundwater supplies are recharged in the spring of the year from melting snow and rainfall. At this time, evaporation and transpiration are low. Groundwater reservoirs are also replenished by water seepage from lakes, ponds, and streams.

#### 5. Vegetative Cover

Generally, the grade lies in an area of lowland hardwoods. Primary cover type within the right-of-way include grasses and brush such as sumac, wild plum, dogwood, and tag alder. Several prairie remnants are also found on or adjacent to the trail, the most important of which is the Midway Prairie Natural Area and the Brice Railroad Prairie (Section 14 & 15 T17N, R8W). The Midway Prairie Natural Area is located alongside the railroad grade just south of County Trunk OT. Wetland are located adjacent to the grade near Lake Onalaska and the Black River, and these have extensive marsh area which include a variety of sedges, rushes, and shrubs. Willow, maple, ash, and oak make up the predominant tree species. The grade which runs adjacent to Perrot State Park is approximately 5/8 mile long and has some prairie remnants that would be worth maintaining. North of the park, land adjacent to the grade is made up of farmland and woodlots.

#### 6. Wildlife

Wildlife is quite abundant on the entire trail between Onalaska and the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge. Game species such as cottontail rabbit, squirrel, and deer are abundant along the corridor. Aquatic bird and animal species including beaver, muskrat, ducks, herons, and egrets frequent the lowland area.

As funds and/or volunteer labor become available, an in-depth survey of mammals and birds of the property should be undertaken.

#### 7. Site Inventory

Land classification within the corridor include upland brush, lowland brush, grass, remnant prairie, marsh, and open water. There are no commercial timber types along the trail corridor.

#### 8. Land Use Inventory

The area utilized by the surfaced trail tread, rest areas, and terminus development is classified intensive recreational development (IRD). It encompasses approximately 34 acres. The remaining trail right-of-way is classified extensive recreation area (ERA).

9. Historical and Archaeological Features

The State Historical Society has been contacted to determine if any historical and/or archaeological features exist on the abandoned railroad right-of-way or on the proposed rest area sites. No sites were identified within the trail corridor.

C. MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS

1. Halfway Creek Trestle

The piles for the trestle over Halfway Creek (section 24, T17N, R8W), La Crosse County, screen the water causing brush and ice to accumulate on the upstream side of the structure. This usually happens during periods of high water when the creek is able to carry more debris.

In the past, the railroad removed the debris during periods of high water. Similarly, the Department will provide manpower to keep the trestle clear of debris and guard against potential blockage. In addition, the feasibility of replacing the bridge with a free-span structure, or constructing some type of debris diverter upstream of the trestle, will be evaluated.

2. La Crosse River Trail Connection

At the present time, the La Crosse River Trail terminus (Medary) is separated by a distance of approximately 2 miles from the beginning point of the Great River Trail in Onalaska. In order to connect these two trails, it will be necessary for the local units of government to designate a trail within the cities of La Crosse and Onalaska. The corridor may follow existing roadways, pedestrian ways, and/or old railroad corridors. Planning between the Department and these local units of government and agencies continues.

3. Leases

There are a number of small land parcels which are leased to individuals for material storage, building sites, and other commercial uses associated with the former rail line. These leases were transferred to the Department of Natural Resources upon assumption of ownership. In some cases the leases will be continued and in other cases the real estate will be sold to private parties, as might be the case where a building is presently located on Department right-of-way.

4. Vegetation Control

Tree and shrub species have invaded the trail right-of-way and at present make it nearly impossible for a vehicle to pass through the corridor. Therefore, a major brush clearing operation on the central 20-25 feet of trail corridor will have to be undertaken

before trail tread construction begins. It will also be necessary to manage the vegetation to guard against encroachment once the trail becomes operational.

#### D. RECREATIONAL NEEDS AND JUSTIFICATIONS

There is a regional need for hiking, biking, and winter use trails. Substantial pressure for recreational sites exists in the La Crosse area. The following summaries of the three trail-oriented recreational activities are listed in the 1981 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation plan (SCORP). By 1995 there will be a need for an additional 36 miles of hiking trails, 180 miles of bicycle trails, and 242 miles of snowmobile trail in the region. Use figures for cross-country skiing were not presented; however, it is recognized that this is a rapidly growing recreational activity and must be considered in the planning process. Similarly, both the 1978 La Crosse County and 1978 Trempealeau County Outdoor Recreation Plans indicate a need for additional biking, hiking, and snowmobile trails.

#### E. ANALYSIS OF ALTERNATIVES

##### 1. Management

###### a. Designate as a state park trail

As a state park, the entire 22 miles of trail could be managed to allow for a wide variety of recreational activity. However, hunting and trapping would be prohibited in conformance with Section 29.574 of the Wisconsin State Statutes. This alternative is not recommended because the trail does have the potential for providing this type of use.

###### b. Designate as a state recreation trail

Under this recommended alternative the trail would be managed as a state recreational area, authorized by statute 23.091, to provide a full range of recreational and educational uses, including hunting and trapping. Use zones could be established with rules adopted to control activities within the zones, as well as limit the number of people using any particular zone. A copy of Statute 23.091 can be found in the Appendix.

##### 2. Development and Acquisition

###### a. Leave the trail in an undeveloped condition

Although the right-of-way has been acquired, this alternative would provide for no further acquisition and no development. The Department would merely retain the right-of-way for future use. This alternative is not desirable since the grade was acquired for recreational purposes and Great River Road funds have been earmarked for the acquisition and development of the project. This is in addition to state recreational funding.

No further acquisition or development could lead to safety, trespass, and encroachment problems, as well as degeneration of the resource.

b. Limited trail development

By acquiring rest area and trail head lands, the Department could provide a 22-mile corridor for limited recreational use. Such activities as hiking, hunting, trapping, and snowmobiling in the winter could be enjoyed without trail surfacing.

A decision to provide only parking and rest areas as major access points could also be made. Toilets, wells, and other facilities would be provided at these locations. Railing and decking of trestles would also occur.

This alternative is not recommended since state, regional, and outdoor recreation plans indicate a need for additional biking trails.

c. Full trail development

This recommended alternative would provide for a full complement of trail facilities for use by bikers, hikers, snowmobilers, cross-country skiers, hunters, and trappers. The trail would be surfaced, the bridges railed and decked and rest areas would be provided at major access points. Toilets, water, and picnic tables would be provided at all major rest stops. The use of local facilities would be utilized where offered.

In regard to allowable activities, bikers and hikers will be allowed over the entire 22 miles of trail. Cross-country skiing would be allowed between Irvine Street in Onalaska and County Trunk ZN in Midway. Snowmobiling would not be allowed on that section of trail.

Snowmobiling would be allowed on that section between County ZN and West Prairie Road (entrance to Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge) as needed to connect approved and funded trails. Hunting and trapping would be allowed in the area from County Trunk ZN to the village limits of Trempealeau. Hunting and trapping would also be allowed from Lehmann Road (north entrance to Perrot Park) to West Prairie Road (entrance to Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge).

Hunting and trapping would not be allowed between the City of Onalaska and County Trunk ZN in Midway, and between the southern limits of the Village of Trempealeau and Lehmann Road. These areas would be closed due to the proximity to urban and residential development.

It must be noted that in those areas when hunting is allowed on the trail, all applicable trespassing and other hunting and trapping laws do apply. Signs will be erected on the trail right-of-way notifying individuals that private landowners do have a legal right to have trespassers arrested.

3. Alternate trail routing

There are two trail routing alternatives to be evaluated. The first is to utilize the Village of Trempealeau streets to connect the trail on the south village limits with the trail corridor on the north village limits. The purpose in routing the trail on the village streets is to bring trail users into closer contact with local business establishments and bypass 4 existing reversions within the community. It is anticipated that this would generate some economic gain for the village, provide the trail user an opportunity to see the village and surrounding countryside, and eliminate the need to immediately develop the trail corridor through the Village of Trempealeau. This option would also allow the state time to acquire the reversion land and to sell land surplus to trail needs. This would provide more land for business and residential lot expansion within the village limits while preserving a corridor for future trail development, if the route on village streets becomes a problem.

A second alternative entails routing the trail onto local streets and the Perrot Park road. It is anticipated that some bikers will want to travel that route to get better associated with the river environs and Perrot State Park. However, due to the narrowness of the road, deep ditches, limited sight line, steep slopes, and adjacent waterways, designating a bike route is not feasible because the corridor cannot meet basic DNR and DOT bicycle route standards. Widening the park road or developing a separate bike route is impractical due to high development costs and resulting impact on the park's natural features.

4. Disposition of surplus lands

There are approximately 24.25 acres of land located within the railroad grade right-of-way west of West Prairie Road. Basically, it is that land lying north of the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge and the west boundary of the abandoned railroad grade. This land may be put up for sale on a sealed bid basis. Another option would be to exchange the land with the Federal Wildlife Refuge for their lands located within Perrot State Park (Trempealeau Bay). The specific method of disposing of this land has yet to be determined. It is unlikely that the land would be retained in state ownership because the trestles have been removed from the Trempealeau and Pine Rivers and, therefore, there is no potential of connecting the trail within this corridor to the Great River Road. Rather, the option of routing the trail from West Prairie Road through the Federal Wildlife Refuge and then on to Highway 35 seems the most logical, economical, and feasible route.



5. Campground development

Perrot State Park campsite facilities will be made available to trail users. If use and demand warrant, state park campground facilities could be enlarged to meet that increased need.

6. Other development and use.

Horseback riding and recreational vehicles such as motorcycles, mini-bikes, four-wheel drives, all-terrain vehicles, etc., are incompatible with bicycling and hiking during the snow-free seasons for safety reasons. Furthermore, constant use of some off-the-road vehicles could cause plant damage and destruction of the trail tread. Since the trail crosses waterways, it is of concern that erosion of the trail tread could cause siltation and turbidity of adjacent water bodies.

23.091 RECREATION AREAS. (1) DESIGNATION. The department may acquire, development, operate and maintain state recreation areas. State lands and waters may be designated as state recreation areas that are environmentally adaptable to intensive recreational uses or are so located to provide regional recreational opportunities for urban areas.

(2) MASTER PLAN. The department may designate a recreational area only after a master plan for use and management of the area is prepared, public hearings on the plan are held in the county where the largest portion of land in the project is located, the procedures prescribed in s. 1.11 are complied with, and the plan is approved by the natural resources board.

(3) USE ZONES. The department may establish use zones within state recreation areas providing for the full range of recreational uses, including hunting and fishing. It may adopt rules to control uses within zones and may limit the number of persons using any zone. such use zones shall be consistent with the activities identified in the master plan formulated under sub. (2)

History: 1977 c. 29.

# MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

WHEREAS, certain abandoned right-of-way and structures of the Chicago and North Western Transportation Company extending from the south right-of-way line of I-90 in La Crosse northerly to the easterly right-of-way line of STH 93 between the Village of Trempealeau and Centerville in Trempealeau County, was recently acquired by the Department of Transportation, hereinafter referred to as DOT, under Project GR 1(9), I.D. 1000-25-64; and

WHEREAS, The DOT presently holds title to that portion of the previously abandoned Chicago and North Western Transportation right-of-way from the easterly right-of-way line of STH 93 northerly to STH 35 & 54 in Buffalo County under Project 1000-25-27/GR 48(12); and

WHEREAS, the DOT subsequently sold that portion of the corridor from the south right-of-way line of I-90 northerly to Irvin Street to the city of Onalaska; and

WHEREAS, the Department of Natural Resources, hereinafter referred to as DNR, has a continuing interest in acquiring the balance of the corridor and formally requested acquisition from DOT on April 25, 1983; and

WHEREAS, the remaining portion of the corridor was financed through use of 75% federal Great River Road program funds and 25% DOT funds; and

WHEREAS, the DOT will retain ownership of the rail right-of-way at all public highway crossings to protect the interests of the general public;

WHEREAS, Great River Road funds have been programmed for use in the development of the corridor as a recreational trail; and

WHEREAS, the DOT is desirous of establishing a clear understanding with respect to acquisition, development, use, management and funding responsibilities involved in said lands.

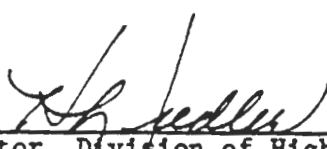
NOW, THEREFORE, DOT and DNR agree as follows:

- (1) Said lands and related structures, other than at public highway crossings, in LaCrosse, Buffalo and Trempealeau Counties will be conveyed by quit claim deed to the DNR for recreational purposes.
- (2) In consideration of this conveyance, the DNR will reimburse DOT 25% of the total real estate and acquisition costs of said lands.
- (3) Within its statutory authority, DNR may provide for utilities within the subject property provided the utilities do not unreasonably interfere with use of the right-of-way as a recreational trail.
- (4) The use and development of that part of said right-of-way acquired by DNR and funded in part with federal Great River Road funds shall be subject to all state and federal requirements with respect to the use of Great River Road funds in the development of the Great River Road parkway program, including: (1) The corridor shall remain in public ownership and shall be open to the public; (2) The DNR assures a continuous recreational trail throughout the length of the project; (3) All permitted uses shall be regulated by DNR in a manner consistent with Federal-Aid Highway Program Manual Vol. 6, Chapter 9, Sec. 15, Paragraph 7f, 8c, and 8d, Design and Construction, attached hereto and made a part hereof; (4) The DNR shall maintain or provide through a second party continued maintenance and that in the event these requirements are violated or the DNR fails to construct and properly maintain such a recreational trail, ownership of the lands, structures, and any other subsequent improvements to such land shall

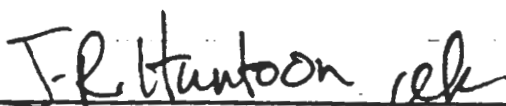
March 27, 1984

revert to DOT. No reversion shall occur until the DOT provides DNR with written notice of non-compliance under this subparagraph, and DNR has adequate time(not less than 180 days) to correct such non-compliance. The DNR is granted the safeguards provided by the state due process.

- (5) The DNR may substitute replacement lands or trail facilities of like quality for a segment of the recreational trail so long as a continuous trail is maintained.
- (6) If DNR disposes of any property or property rights, that portion of the acquisition funded with GRR funds shall be refunded to DOT.
- (7) In the event DOT lands conveyed to DNR by this agreement are needed for highway purposes, they may be used by DOT upon provision of satisfactory replacement lands or trail facilities of like kind and utility to DNR by DOT. Conveyance in this manner shall preclude the need to prepare 4(f) Statements for individual projects utilizing Federal Aid Highway funds.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator, Division of Highways and  
Transportation Facilities  
Department of Transportation

3-29-84  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Administrator, Division of Resource Management  
Department of Natural Resources

4/9/84  
Date

# CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: January 22, 1986

File Ref: 1430

To: Dave Weizenicker - PR/4

From: Dick Lindberg - FR/4 *DL*

Subject: Great River State Trail Master Plan Review

The Wild Resources Advisory Council is in favor of the trail and supports the proposed plan.

DL:dj





FEB 05 1986

**The State of Wisconsin**  
NATURAL  
~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ AREAS PRESERVATION COUNCIL  
Box 7921  
Madison, Wisconsin 53707

IN REPLY REFER TO: 1750

January 31, 1986

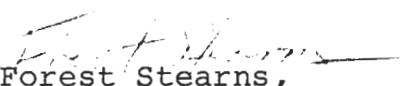
→ Mr. David Weizenicker  
Bureau of Parks and Recreation  
Department of Natural Resources  
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Dave:

We have reviewed the Great River State Recreational Trail Master Plan, and note that the abandoned railway includes or joins several noteworthy remnant prairies (including one state natural area, Midway Prairie).

Development of the trail for recreational use should be compatible with maintenance of these prairie remnants. We suggest that maintenance of these important natural areas; is of such importance that it should be stated as a property objective.

Cordially,

  
Forest Stearns,  
Chairman

# CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

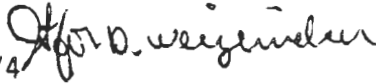
STATE OF WISCONSIN

Date: April 1, 1986

File Ref: 2100-1

To: Cliff Germain-ER/4

From: D. L. Weizenicker-PR/4



Subject: NAPC Comments on Great River State Trail Master Plan.

This is in response to the Council's comments on the Great River Master Plan.

We concur that maintenance of the prairie remnants on the trail corridor right-of-way is very important. A property objective for the maintenance of these remnants has been added to the master plan at the suggestion of the Council.

We thank the Council for reviewing the Great River Master Plan.

DJK:btM639

cc: J. Treichel-PR/4  
D. Kulhanek-PR/4 ←  
J. Lissack-Eau Claire



District or Bureau: West Central District  
Docket Number:  
Type List Designation(s): NR 150.03(2)(a)1,5

#1620

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Applicant: West Central District, Department of Natural Resources

Title of Proposal: Extension of La Crosse River Trail (Great River Trail) including acquisition and development proposals.

Location: La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties (See attached plat maps for townships, ranges, sections, and political towns.)

PROJECT SUMMARY

1. General Description (brief overview)

The project proposes the transfer and development of a railroad corridor owned by the state of Wisconsin and under the jurisdiction of the Department of Transportation. The project proposes to add 19 1/4 miles of abandoned railroad corridor to the existing 20.43 mile long La Crosse River Trail. The section of trail (railroad corridor) from Irvine Street in Onalaska to a point near the entrance road to the Trempealeau Federal Wildlife refuge encompasses approximately 233 acres. Small (5-10 acre) privately owned parcels may also be purchased at Medary, Onalaska, Midway, and Trempealeau for trail connector, parking lot, and rest area development. Establishment of the project would be contingent upon successful transfer of the right-of-way. This would increase the present acreage goal of 320 acres by 275 acres for a total of 595 acres within the project area boundary.

The right-of-way will provide a public recreation trail which will accommodate year-round use with 2-way traffic for biking, hiking, and snowmobiling, as well as allow for small game hunting and trapping as described in the original plan.

Primary access to the grade is provided by either Interstate Highway 90 or US 35-53, the Great River Road, and Highway 93.

Geographically, the right-of-way is located on a north-south axis in West Central Wisconsin within La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties. Beginning at Irvine Street in Onalaska, the grade proceeds northwesterly from the La Crosse/Onalaska metropolitan area (population 60,000+) to

Midway (unincorporated) and then to Trempealeau (population 743). From Trempealeau, the grade proceeds to its terminus at the township road leading into the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Total population within an hour and a half drive of the trail exceeds two million people.

The extended trail could be an important corridor for biking, hiking, and snowmobiling as it has very good connector potential to the existing La Crosse River Trail and Elroy-Sparta Trail. A gap occurs between the west end of the La Crosse River Trail and the proposed extension. Several alternatives are being studied at this time for a connection which may involve use of city streets, highway corridors, or other railroad right-of-way. The alternative chosen for connecting the two trails will be covered in an amendment to the environmental assessment at a later date.

The extension would also link to Perrot State Park, various state and federal government land along the Mississippi, and provide possible linkage to existing and proposed county snowmobile trails as well as Wisconsin State Bike Trail Systems.

Six reversions totaling 5.03 acres on the proposed extension will require negotiation by the Department of Natural Resources for purchase.

If acquired and developed, approximately 50,000 users per year could be expected to use the new trail segment between Onalaska and the Federal Wildlife Refuge.

2. Purpose and Need (include history and background as appropriate).

In the mid-1960's, Wisconsin pioneered a new national concept in outdoor recreation by acquiring abandoned railroad right-of-way and establishing grades as state parks or recreational areas for public trail purposes. The La Crosse River Trail was established under the provisions of Chapter 23.091, Wisconsin Statutes, which pertains to state recreation areas.

Abandoned railroad right-of-ways provide an excellent corridor for trail use and supply much needed recreational facilities for hiking, biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling and cross country skiing. Public use of the state trail system has exceeded expectations and has bolstered area economies. Local citizens are promoting the trails as an asset to their communities.

The Department operates 10 state trails totaling over 280 miles in length.

As outlined in the recreational needs and justification section of the La Crosse River Trail master plan, there is a need for hiking, biking, and winter use trails. Substantial pressure for recreational sites exist from the La Crosse area. The following summaries of the three trail-oriented recreational activities are listed in the 1977 State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreational Plan (SCORP) as follows: By 1995, there will be a need for an additional 36 miles of hiking trails, 180 miles of bicycle trails, and 242 miles of snowmobile trails. There is no indication that additional cross country ski trails would be needed.

The 1977 SCORP for Region 4 (Crawford, Vernon, La Crosse, and Monroe Counties) and Region 12 (Buffalo, Trempealeau, and Jackson Counties) indicate a need for additional hiking, biking, and snowmobile trails totaling over 100 miles for each category for 1985. Similarly, both the 1978 La Crosse County and 1978 Trempealeau County outdoor recreation plans indicate a need for additional biking, hiking, and snowmobile trails.

3. Authorities and Approvals (list statutory authority and other relevant local, state and federal permits or approvals required)

The trail would be designated as a state recreation area authorized under statute 23.091. Under this classification, the trail would be managed to provide a full range of recreational and educational opportunities including small game hunting and trapping. Use zones could be established with rules adopted to control activities within the zones, as well as limit the number of people using the zone.

Building designs must meet state and local requirements for public buildings and zoning regulations. Acquisition of real property must be approved by the Natural Resources Board and the Governor.

4. Estimated Cost and Funding Source

Cost to the Department of Natural Resources for this project will be \$50,000 for land, \$5000 for land survey, and \$70,000 for development.

Actual land value as estimated by DOT is \$155,500, while land survey cost is \$20,000. Great River Road funds amounting to \$210,000 will be made available to DNR to add to the \$70,000 DNR funds to total \$280,000 for develop-

ment. Additional development funds may be sought at a later date for additional development upon completion of the master plan for this segment of trail. (\$70,000 in DNR funds is required to obtain an additional \$210,000 in Great River Road funds for development.)

In summary, for an expenditure of \$125,000, the DNR can acquire a project worth \$455,500.

#### PROPOSED PHYSICAL CHANGES

5. Manipulation of Terrestrial Resources (include relevant quantities - sq. ft., cu. yds., etc.)

The ultimate goal is to acquire and convert the 19 1/4 mile grade segment into an integral part of the La Crosse River Trail which will provide a safe, enjoyable facility for public use. Development would include planking and railing of trestles, surfacing the trail with a 7-foot wide layer of finely crushed limestone and providing parking lots and rest areas near Onalaska, Midway, and Trempealeau. The facilities for these rest areas would consist of parking lots for 20-50 cars, toilet facilities, drinking water, picnic tables, bike racks, grills, signing, and other related facilities. Where possible, municipal utilities will be used for sewer and water hook-ups. It is expected Perrot State Park will serve as one of the major termini and starting points for the grade's northern reaches as the park provides camping and other recreational facilities which could be used by trail users.

The typical rest area would include: a 40-car gravel parking lot (65 x 200 x .5 foot), a 4-unit sealed vault pit toilet (excavate +40 yards soil), a well and hand pump, a 2-5 acre picnic rest area which would be cleared, grubbed, graded, and seeded with lawn grass. Minor landscaping including tree and shrub planting or removal would occur. Picnic tables, bulletin boards, bike racks, trash cans, benches, and other furnishing may be provided.

6. Manipulation of Aquatic Resources (include relevant quantities - cfs., acre feet, MGD, etc.)

According to USGS quads, there are 8 river, stream, and pond crossings. There are also numerous intermittent stream crossings. The requirements of Chapter 30 and 31 of the Wisconsin Statutes, Manual Code 3565.1, will be followed in the event of bridge or culvert replacement.

7. Buildings, Treatment Units, Roads and Other Structures

A number of culverts and bridges are located on the grade and will be retained. All of the structures were inspected by engineering staff and have been determined to be of sound condition. There are approximately 3,100 lineal feet of trestles which will need decking and railing.

8. Emissions and Discharges

Some local noise and air pollution might be expected during construction due to the equipment operation and disruption conditions. Vehicular traffic generated by trail users can be expected to increase slightly in the area and add some to the noise and potential air pollution. These emissions, however, are not expected to significantly affect the ambient air quality. Fossil fuels and lubricants consumed by construction equipment and that used to manufacture materials, will be consumed and result in some exhaust emissions.

9. Other Changes

None

10. Attach Maps, Plans and Other Descriptive Material as Appropriate (list)

- A. Location Map
- B. Plat Maps

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Information Based On (check all that apply):

- ☒ Literature/correspondence
- ☒ Personal Contacts (list in item 31)
  - Field Analysis By: ☒ Author, ☒ Other  
(list in item 31)
  - Past Experience With Site By: ☒ Author,  
☒ Other (list in item 31)

11. Physical (topography - soils - water - air - wetland amounts and types)

The grade lies in the unglaciated portion of West Central Wisconsin. The area is characterized by lowland and sandy plains, surrounded by the steep bluffs and gorges of the Mississippi, La Crosse, and Black River Valleys. The rail line is generally level with cuts and fills located pre-

dominantly in the lower rolling area between Trempealeau and Midway. Distant bluffs, with their exposed rock faces and vegetative cover, are visible from nearly all points along the grade. The section in the La Crosse-Onalaska metropolitan area abuts a variety of business, residential, and institutional buildings. Farmland and scattered marshes encompass the grade for the first two to three miles north of Midway. Proceeding further north, farmland gives way to lowland forest, marshes, and open water near the Black River and Shingle Creek. Nearly all of the surrounding land in this area is owned by the Fish and Wildlife Service. North of Shingle Creek, adjacent land use is predominately farming with small, scattered woodlots, marshes, and backwater sloughs mixed in. This type of land use continues until reaching the corporate limits of Trempealeau. Trempealeau has a variety of business and residences located near the grade. Just north of Trempealeau, the railroad grade abuts Perrot State Park and follows the Trempealeau Mountain range. A mixture of farmland and woodlots create open and closed spaces along the grade. Proceeding north, the railroad line enters the riverbottom and runs adjacent to the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge until it terminates at the township road.

The La Crosse River is crossed near Medary Junction. Lake Onalaska and the Mississippi River are visible from the grade near Onalaska. Halfway Creek is crossed one mile north of Midway. The Black River and Shingle Creek are crossed 5-6 miles north of Midway. Ponds owned by the state and located just south of Trempealeau are in close proximity to the grade.

Soils in the vicinity of the grade within La Crosse and Trempealeau Counties include silty soils of valleys and benches near West Salem, sandy soils of the Mississippi River Valley (mostly Plainfield and Sparta soils) from Medary to Midway, and wet bottomland soils such as alluvial sands which are poorly drained, and marshland from Midway to Trempealeau. Dickinson-Gotham-Sparta association soils which are excessively drained to well-drained that have a subsoil of loamy sand to fine sandy loam over fine to coarse sand on river terraces are located between Trempealeau and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Area. The rail line is located on a grade composed of rock and cinder ballast.

The climate is continental with large annual temperature range and numerous short-period temperature changes. The average growing season is 164 days. The average date is the last frost in spring is April 29 and the first in autumn is October 10. Prevailing winds are from the north-

west in winter and from the south and southwest during the spring, summer, and fall. The average amount of sunshine is 56% with the maximum amount being received in July. The average yearly precipitation is 29 inches with the largest percentage occurring during the five-month period, May through September.

Railroad ties not salvaged by the railroad company will be disposed of according to forthcoming Department regulations. Fencing along the right of way (new and replacement) will be constructed depending on priority and available funding in accordance with Manual Code 2254.6.

## 12. Biological

### a) Flora

Generally, the grade lies in an area of lowland hardwoods. Primary cover type within the right-of-way include grasses and brush such as sumac, wild plum, dogwood, and tag alder. Several prairie remnants are also found along the trail, the most important of which is the Midway prairie scientific area and the Brice railroad prairie which has county significance. The Midway prairie scientific area is located on the railroad grade just south of County Trunk OT and encompasses approximately 1/4 mile of the rail right-of-way. Wetlands are located adjacent to the grade near Lake Onalaska and the Black River and these have extensive marsh areas which include a variety of sedges, rushes, and shrubs. Willow, maple, ash, and oak make up the predominant tree species. The grade which runs adjacent to Perrot State Park is approximately 5/8's mile long and has remnants of virgin prairie species that would be worth maintaining. North of the park, land adjacent to the grade is made up of farmlands and intermixed woodlots. It is proposed that the Bureau of Endangered Resources evaluate the prairie remnant near Perrot State Park to determine its value and need for protection.

### b) Fauna

Wildlife is quite abundant on the trail section between Onalaska and the Trempealeau National Wildlife Refuge. Game species such as cottontail rabbit, squirrel, and deer are abundant along the corridor. Aquatic bird and animal species including beaver, muskrat, ducks, herons, and egrets frequent the lowland area.

13. Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups, and zoning if applicable)

The railroad corridor extension is located between the metropolitan La Crosse/Onalaska area (population 60,000+) and Trempealeau (population 743). The grade also passes through Midway (unincorporated). It is expected that many of the trail users, which may number 50,000 per year, will contribute to the economy of the local communities. Projects such as planking and railing, surfacing, toilet construction, wells, etc. may also have a beneficial impact on the local economy.

All revenues collected from the sale of trail user permits are remitted to a segregated fund from which trail operation and maintenance is partially subsidized.

This action will not affect or displace any ethnic group or Native Americans. The trail facilities will be designed to accommodate individuals with physical handicaps.

14. Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)

The State Historical Society (SHS) will be contacted to determine if any historical or archaeological features exist on the abandoned railroad right-of-way or on the proposed rest area sites. Depending on the response from the SHS, archaeological surveys may be required.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES (probable adverse and beneficial impacts including indirect and secondary impacts)

15. Physical (include visual if applicable)

Development of the grade should have minor impact on the resource. Management practices would include implementing the Department's trail fencing policy, maintaining the trail facilities, controlling weed growth, and managing the vegetation according to a specific plan.

Lands used for rest area development would be located near the abandoned grade. Historically, most rest areas have been constructed on relatively flat, disturbed sites associated with past railroad activities (commercial, industrial, storage areas, or fallow fields). Development includes grading for improved drainage and landscaping for site amenities. This results in positive site rehabilitation and increased user enjoyment.

Unsalvageable railroad ties will be disposed of in accordance with Department regulations.



Some increase in vehicular traffic into and through the area will add to the noise and potential air pollution although it is not expected to significantly affect Wisconsin's air quality. Increased traffic will increase energy use. Although short-term, construction activities will cause some local noise and air pollution.

Proposed development will have a negligible effect on drainage.

#### 16. Biological

The corridor will be maintained as a state recreation area trail. The land will not be lost to urban sprawl and agricultural fields. Surface and groundwater quality are not expected to be adversely affected. Existing vegetation will be managed to control weeds, and promote a variety of vegetative types for wildlife habitat with some cutting of Zoody plants to maintain scenic vistas. Maintenance of prairie areas will also continue and be increased as warranted. Human use may be somewhat detrimental to the behavior pattern of some wildlife, although it should be negligible in comparison to past train traffic.

#### 17. Social/Economic (include ethnic and cultural groups and zoning if applicable)

This corridor has the potential of being a very popular state trail for hiking, biking, and snowmobiling. It has good tie-in potential to the Elroy-Sparta Trail via the existing La Crosse River Trail. It would also link to Perrot State Park, various state and federal government lands along the Mississippi, and provide linkage to existing and proposed county snowmobile and bicycle trails. The heavily populated La Crosse metropolitan area need for recreational facilities could be well served. However, if the land were sold to individuals for homes, business, industry, and farm uses the corridor would be lost forever as an outdoor recreation area. Approximately 50,000 visitors are expected to use the trail annually.

Studies indicate that state-owned land is not an economic burden to local governmental units due to the state payments in lieu of taxes. Since these lands are not on the tax roll, local taxes will benefit when jurisdiction is transferred to DNR.

18. Other Special Resources (e.g., archaeological, historical, endangered/ threatened species, scientific areas, natural areas)

No archaeological or historical sites should be affected by the proposals since the 100-foot right-of-way is already a disturbed zone within a rail corridor. Lands purchased outside the right-of-way for terminus and rest stop development may require an archaeological survey. No rare or endangered plant or animal species are known to be present along the grade.

19. Probable Adverse Impacts That Cannot be Avoided

Transfer of jurisdiction will have minimal adverse impact on the existing environment.

When trail development occurs, there will be some air pollution caused by auto and snowmobile emissions as well as a minimal increase in noise from autos, snowmobiles, bikers, hikers, and other trail users. Some noise and air pollution may occur during the development of the facility. Adjacent landowners may object to snowmobile travel on the trail due to noise, emissions, electrical static, and other environmental consequences created by their use.

Some minor grading will take place around the terminus and rest area parking lots and toilet facilities; however, this will only minimally alter existing topography and drainage patterns. Some soil erosion could occur at construction sites, but this will be minimized through the use of appropriate erosion control techniques.

Public services such as police and fire protection, as well as medical attention, may be needed when the grade is developed and used by the public.

Traffic will increase somewhat (approximately 1,450 vehicles per year) on the highway systems leading to the trail; however, this increase is not expected to have a significant effect on the traffic volume.

There will be an increase in bike traffic on the existing bike route within the La Crosse/Onalaska metropolitan area and possible increased traffic on the Elroy-Sparta trail and the Wisconsin bikeway. This may cause a conflict with motorists where the bike routes utilize county highways and city streets.

ALTERNATIVES (no action - enlarge - reduce - modify - other locations and/or methods)

20. Identify, describe and discuss feasible alternatives to the proposed action and their impacts. Give particular attention to alternatives which might avoid some or all adverse environmental effects.

There are three alternatives. The first is DNR development development, maintenance, and management of the grade as an extension of the La Crosse River Trail. Such action would assure retention of the resource for recreational purposes. This alternative will provide for a full complement of trail facilities for biking, hiking, and snowmobiling, as well as provide for small game hunting and trapping in specified areas during specified times of the year. The trail will be surfaced and the bridges planked and railed. Parking areas, toilets, drinking water, and other trail amenities will be provided at the terminuses and rest areas. Where possible, local facilities will be utilized if made available.

The second alternative would provide the same basic facilities as the first alternative, but would be the responsibility of county and local units of government. This action would retain the resource for recreational trail purposes. The role of the DNR would include encouraging local leadership to plan and develop the trail based on uniform trail development guidelines. This option has already been investigated and found not feasible due to limited county budgets and withdrawal by Dairyland Power as a third party involved in the acquisition development and operation of the trail.

A third alternative would provide for no development of the right-of-way as an extension of the La Crosse River Trail. The right-of-way could be sold to adjacent property owners and other interested individuals. Such action would cause the grade to be lost forever for recreational trail use.

EVALUATION (discuss each category. Attach additional sheets and other pertinent information if necessary.)

21. Secondary Effects: As a result of this action, is it likely that other events or actions will happen that may significantly affect the environment? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

Based on experience gained from other state trails, it is unlikely that other events or actions will occur which may significantly alter the environment. Traffic volumes on

roads adjacent to the proposed trail should not increase significantly. Police and fire protection will be provided by the Department of Natural Resources. If supplementary protection is needed, it should be limited and, therefore, should not cause an increase in local agency manpower and equipment needs.

22. New Environmental Effect: Does the action alter the environment so a new physical, biological or socio-economic environment would exist? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 5-10 or 15-18 as appropriate.

The abandoned grade will provide a safe, off-road trail for bikers, hikers, and snowmobilers. Development will generate revenue for local contractors and local businesses should realize increased sales due to trail user purchases. Aids in lieu of taxes will be paid by the Department to local government thereby increasing tax revenue. Development will slightly alter the railroad grade, trestles, and land use for terminus and rest area development. Vegetation will be allowed to grow in the margins of the right-of-way in certain areas, prairies will be maintained in certain areas, and weeds will be controlled.

23. Geographically Scarce: Are the existing environmental features that would be affected by the proposed action scarce, either locally or statewide? If so, list here and reference their discussion in items 15-18 as appropriate.

There are only a limited number of railroad grades existing in the west central portion of the state. There are no abandoned right-of-ways which provide the potential for trail extension and use in the major metropolitan area such as the section of grade between Onalaska and Trempealeau Federal Wildlife Refuge. In addition, there are two remnant prairies identified; one as a scientific area and the second as a NA II or county-wide significant prairie area. In addition, there's a section of grade with virgin prairie remnant located adjacent to Perrot State Park. Therefore, there are some natural features that are relatively unique and scarce and have local and statewide significance.

24. Precedent: Does the action and its effect(s) require a decision which would result in influencing future decisions? Describe.

The proposed trail project is similar to the DNR's other trails which are being used or are in early stages of development.

25. Controversy: Discuss and describe concerns which indicate a serious controversy or unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.

Transfer and development of the grade as an extension of the La Crosse River Trail does not appear to be controversial.

26. Consistency With Plans: Does the action conflict with local or agency zoning or with official agency plans or policy of local, state or federal government (e.g., NR 1.95)? If so, how? Refer to applicable comments in item 31.

The Department will utilize input from local government officials, interested citizens, and organizations during the master planning period. This will be done to insure that all individual, agency, and government unit concerns are addressed and resolved.

27. Cumulative Impacts: While the action by itself may be limited in scope, would repeated actions of this type result in major or significant impacts to the environment?

Based on other state trails which utilize existing railroad right-of-way, converting the railroad grade into a recreational trail will have very little impact on the existing corridor. Conversion to trail use will be beneficial to wildlife habitat as grasslands, trees, and shrubs are allowed to grow in the right-of-way.

28. Foreclose Future Options: Is the action irreversible? Will it commit a resource (e.g., energy, habitat, historical features) for the foreseeable future?

If acquired, the grade would be used for trail purposes. However, the land utilized for trail facilities could be reclaimed by obliterating constructed items such as parking lots, toilets, etc. The site could then be regraded and revegetated.

29. Socio-cultural Impacts: Will action result in direct or indirect impacts on ethnic or cultural groups or alter social patterns?

Interaction between trail users and people living along the trail will occur. Information provided by people living adjacent to other trails indicates that such dialogue is an enjoyable benefit related to the trail. Based on past experience at other state trails, trespassing and poor social behavior are almost non-existent.

## 30) Other:

None

## LIST OF AGENCIES, GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED REGARDING THE PROJECT (Include DNR personnel and title)

31. Date	Contact	Comments
1/25/79	Bill Tanns	Information regarding prairie remnants on the right-of-way.
3/29/79	Natural Resources Board	Board gave preliminary approval to acquire the grade between Onalaska and the Trempealeau River.
4/4/79	Government & Utility representatives; interested in the Medary Junction to Galesville line (Chicago-Northwestern)	Meeting to discuss ICC timetable, solicitation of interest, purchase procedures and Wisconsin Department of Transportation concerns.
4/15/81	Dominick Mangardi	Bridge and culvert inspection report.
5/18/83	Lowell Jackson to Buzz Besadny	Acknowledgement of the Great River Road funding available for acquisition and development.
6/9/83	Lowell Jackson to Buzz Besadny	Confirmation of Great River Road monies available for acquisition and development.
10/17/83	Bureau of Parks & Rec., Bureau of Real Estate, La Crosse Area and Black River Falls Area personnel	Discussed procedures for transferring and developing the extension.
11/83	Ron Olson	Lengths and acreage figures.

Project Name: Extension of La Crosse River Trail  
Counties: Trempealeau and La Crosse

RECOMMENDATION

EIS Not Required . . . . .

Analysis of the expected impacts of this proposal is of sufficient scope and detail to conclude that this is not a major action which would significantly affect the quality of the human environment. In my opinion therefore, an environmental impact statement is not required prior to final action by the Department on this project.

Refer to Office of the Secretary . . . . .

Major and Significant Action: Prepare EIS . . . . .

Request EIR . . . . .

Additional factors, if any, affecting the evaluator's  
recommendation:

---

**Signature of Evaluator**

Michael L. Ries

12-22-83

Date \_\_\_\_\_

J. Thiel f. p. u. z. n. i. c. k. e. 1/3/14

51 responses  
reports attached

668  
12-22-8

District Director or Director of BEI (or Designee)

Lewis Beckman

1/25/84

MRT086



- [illegible]

- STATE PARKS
- STATE FORESTS
- ... STATE TRAILS
- INCLUDED IN ICE AGE NATIONAL SCIENTIFIC RESERVE
- ▲ RECREATION AREA



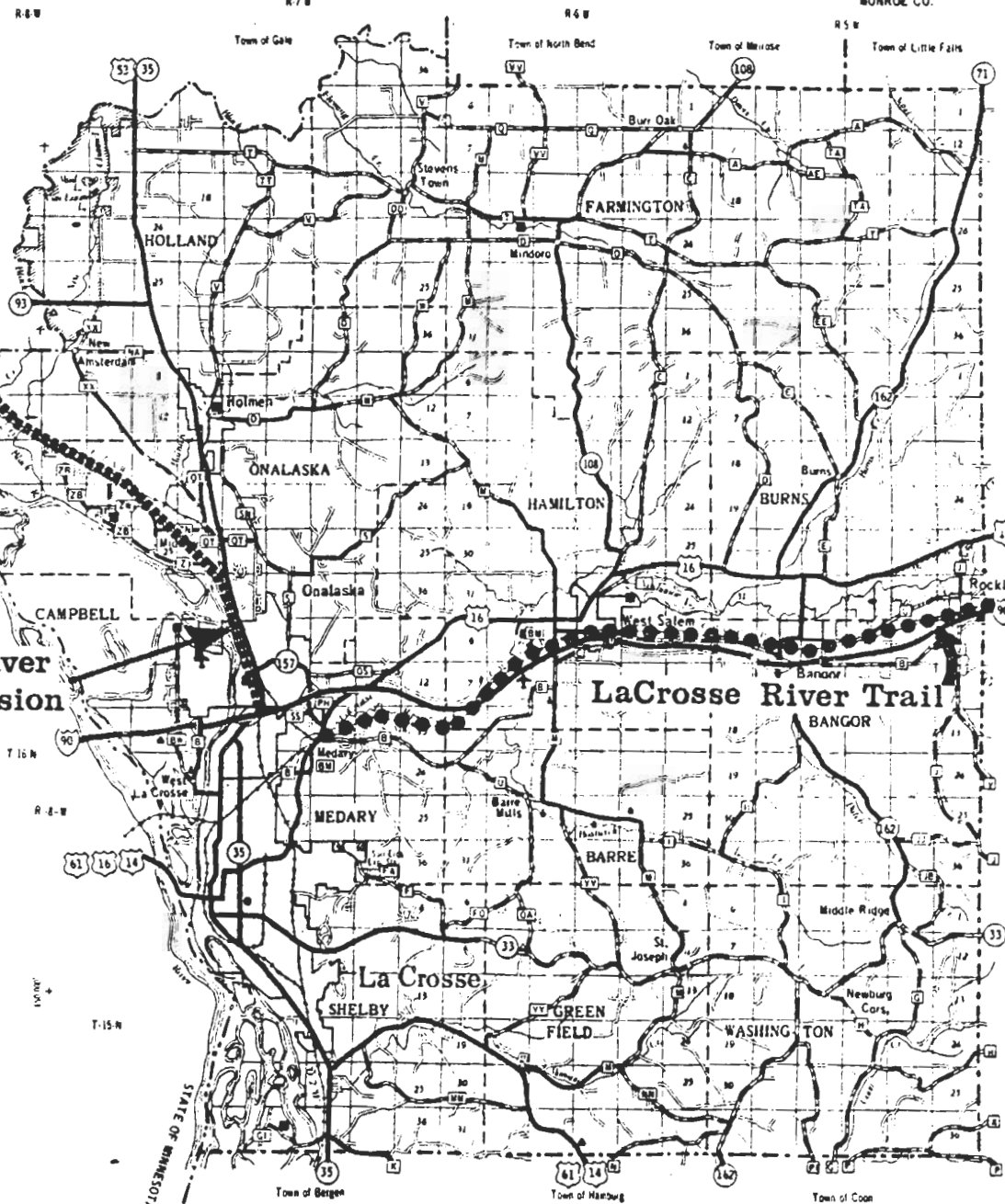
T-18-N  
TREMPEALEAU CO.  
Town of Candiana  
Town of Little Falls

T-17-N  
STATE OF MINNESOTA  
U.S. Army Radio Sta.  
T-16-N

# LaCrosse River Trail Extension

## LEGEND

- U.S. State
- COUNTY
- Permanent Center
- Barren Center
- Settlement
- Gravel
- Earth
- Trail Road
- Fee Land
- Barren Divided
- Freeway
- Interchange
- Highway Separation
- Interstate Highway No.
- U.S. Highway No.
- State Highway No.
- County Map Letter
- Roadbed
- Crack
- State Boundary
- County Boundary
- Coal Town Boundary
- Corporate Limits
- Har & State Forest
- Airport
- Post Highway
- Cane Farm
- County Seat
- Unincorporated Village
- School
- Public Hall or Post Office
- Manor
- Ranger Station
- Public Camp & Picnic Site
- State Park
- State Park
- County Park
- Wayside



T-16-N  
T-15-N  
T-14-N  
T-13-N  
T-12-N  
T-11-N  
T-10-N  
T-9-N  
T-8-N  
T-7-N  
T-6-N  
T-5-N  
T-4-N  
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R-7-W

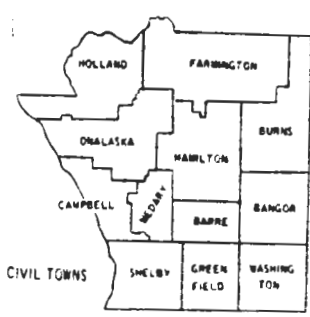
VERNON CO.  
HOLLAND  
FARMINGTON  
ONALASKA  
HAMILTON  
BURNS  
CAMPBELL  
MEDARY  
BARRE  
BANGOR  
SHELBY  
GREENFIELD  
WASHINGTON

WILES OF HIGHWAY  
AS OF JAN. 1, 1977

STATE	COUNTY	LOCAL ROADS	OTHER ROADS
WI	LA CROSSE	57	1016

TOTAL FOR COUNTY 1073

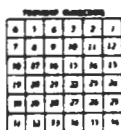
LA CROSSE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Madison, Wisconsin  
SCALE 1:25,000  
Corrected for  
JAN. 1978  
Compiled from U.S.G.S. Quadrangles  
Based on Aerial Photographs



LA CROSSE  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS  
STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
Madison, Wisconsin  
SCALE 1:25,000  
Corrected for  
JAN. 1978  
Compiled from U.S.G.S. Quadrangles  
Based on Aerial Photographs

\* Survey 1968 on main roads and station

+ Grid based on Wisconsin coordinate system, south-control zones

<sup>a</sup> Further steps in this study are shown.

ALL INFORMATION CONTAINED  
HEREIN IS UNCLASSIFIED  
DATE 01-21-2001 BY 60322 UCBAW

STATE  
COUNTY  
LOCAL OFFICE  
LOCAL NUMBER

\* 394 FOR LAMPS

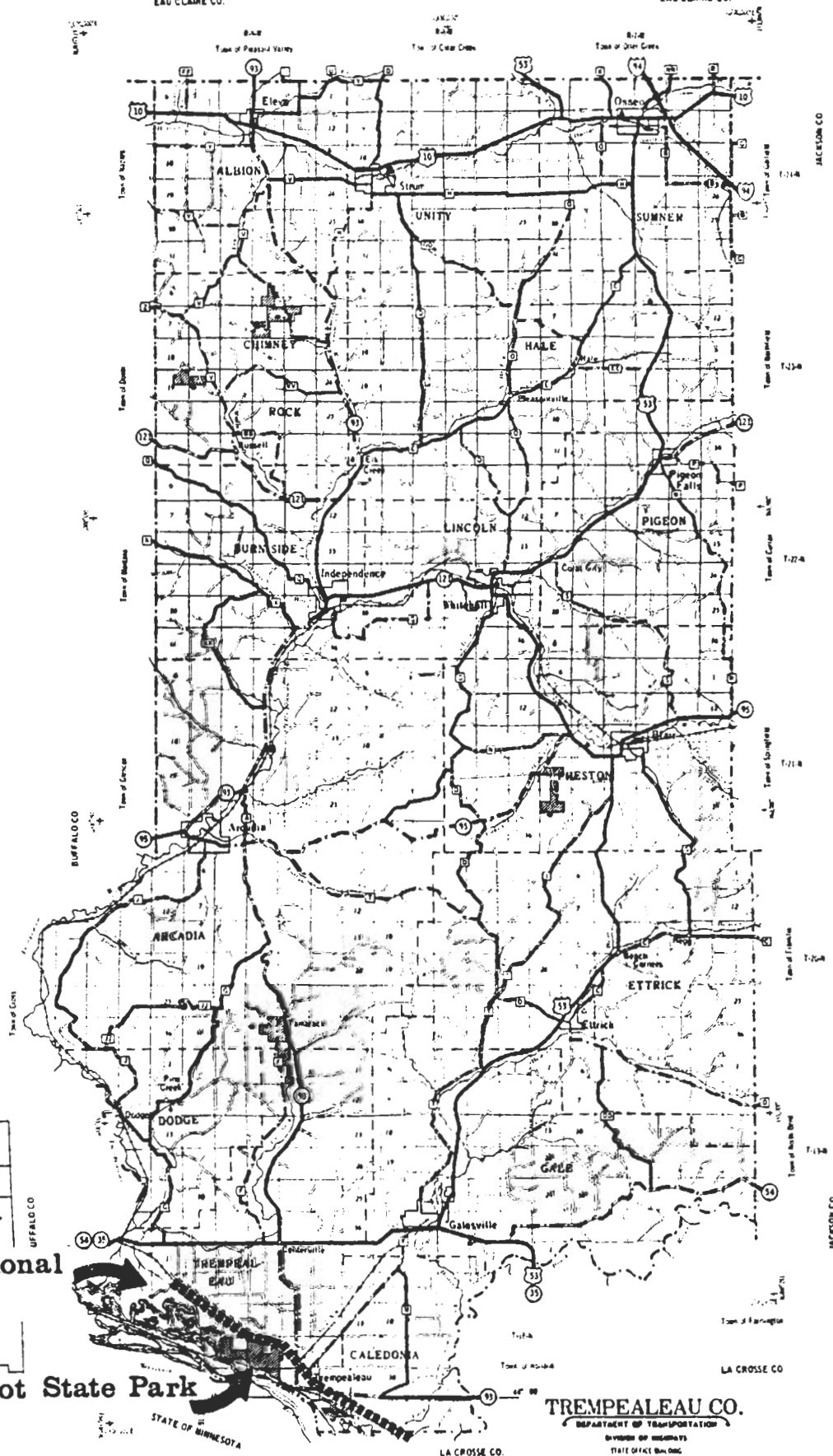
CIVIL TOWNS		
ALBION	JEFFERSON	STANLEY
COLUMBIA	HALL	
BRUNSON	WILSON	WILSON

A map of the Perrot area in Quebec, showing the locations of Perrot, Dorval, and Dorval.

## Perrot State Park

EAU CLAIRE CO.

EAU CLAIRE CO



**TREMPEALEAU CO.**

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SAVED BY MARYA VI

[illegible]SCALE 1: 

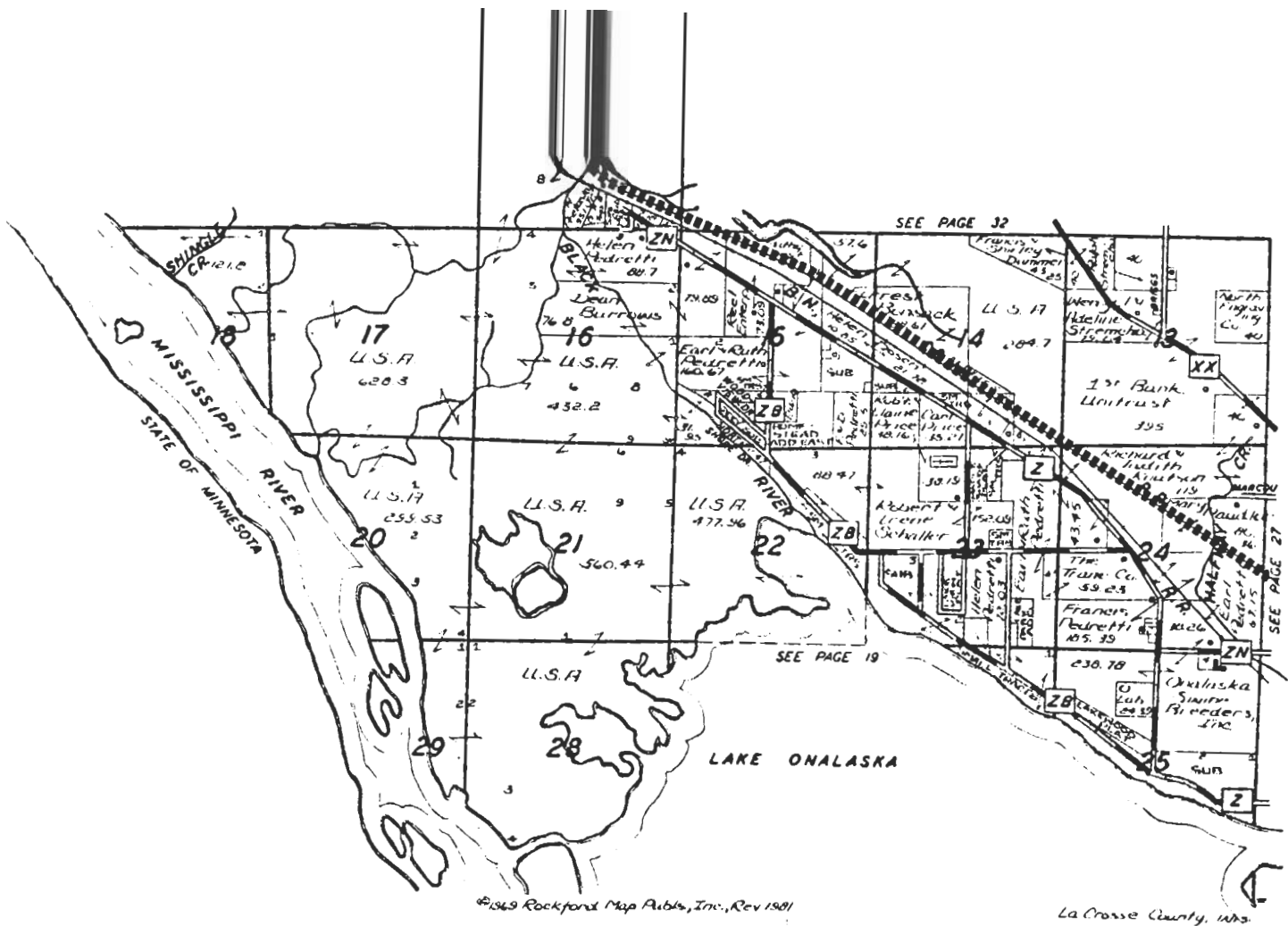
Connected to

4 JUL 1991

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### End of Paragraph

TREMPEAU 61-S



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Deposit Accounts - Loans - Auctions

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COURTESY OF

*Outers*  
**Laboratories, Inc.**

ONALASKA, WISCONSIN



**FROM BIG 4-H ER'S  
LITTLE 4-H ER'S  
GROW**



*Courtesy Of*

**METALLICS, INC.**

Onalaska, Wisconsin

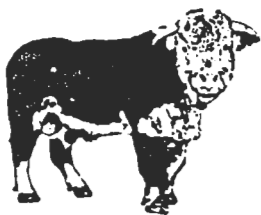


# WIGGERT HEREFORD RANCH

M. C. Nelson Road  
Holmen, Wisconsin  
54636

**RANCH:**  
(608) 526-4639

**OFFICE:**  
(608) 784-4790



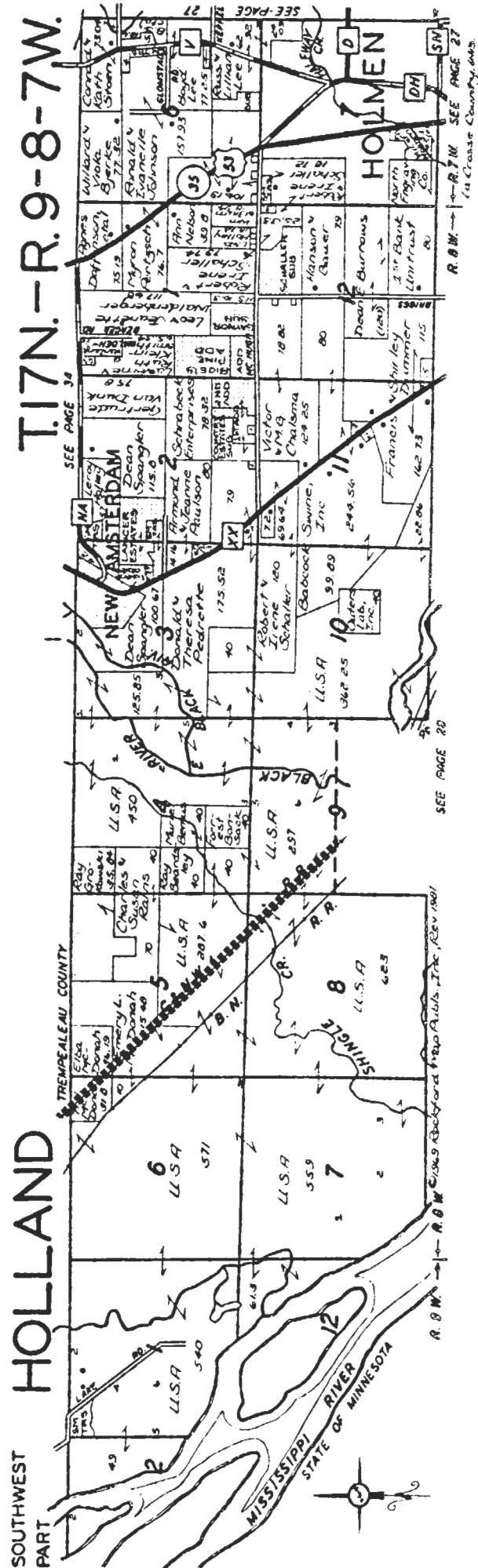
## WIGGERT BROS.

4th and Jay Streets  
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

**PHONE:**  
(608) 784-4790

**HARRY H. WIGGERT**  
Partner

WHOLESALE OF  
MarkMaster - Mowers  
Tractors - Snowblowers  
Rifeway Wood Heaters  
Sensation - Commercial Mowers  
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T.18 N.-R.9-8 W.



**Phone:**  
**(608) 582-2836**

Galesville, Wisconsin  
54630

# SEED

# CARHART'S

# CORN



**HIGH PERFORMANCE HYBRIDS — REASONABLY PRICED**  
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T.18N-R.10-9W.

SEE PAGE 13

SEE PAGE 73

**SEE PAGE 11**

SEE PAGE

12.01.1948

LA CROSSE CO.

## Galesville, Wisconsin



**Yards Open  
Tuesdays and  
Thursdays**

**YARDS:**  
**582-2064**  
**F. J. EMERSON:**  
**582-2964**  
**JOHN EMERSON:**  
**582-2317**



AMENDMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (EA)  
(Use separate sheets of paper if needed)

Title of Original Assessment and County (include date certified):

Extension of LaCrosse River Trail, LaCrosse and Trempealeau Counties certified - 1/25/84

District:

West Central

Describe the Nature of Proposed Amendments and the Reasons Therefore:

Rather than as an extension of the LaCrosse River Trail, the 22-mile former rail line, according to the master plan, will be identified as a separate entity called the Great River Trail. It will have a project acreage goal of 265 acres.

Discuss Probable Adverse and Beneficial Impacts Not Covered in the Original EA That Would be Generated by the Amended Action and Additional Alternatives Considered:

The amended action does not generate additional probable adverse or beneficial impacts.

Recommendation: Are the additional considerations on the environmental impacts of the proposed project, in conjunction with the contents of the original EA, of sufficient magnitude, complexity, or significance to change the Department's decision to write an EIS for this project?

No

Number of Public Responses to Original EA:

51

Evaluator:

Michael L. Ries

Date:

12/22/83

Certified to be in Compliance with WEPA:

Date:

*Say A. Burch*  
*April 30, 1986*

This decision is not final until certified by the appropriate District Director or the Director of BEAR. If you believe you have a right to challenge this decision, you should know that Wisconsin Statutes and Administrative Codes establish time periods within which requests to review Department decisions must be filed. For judicial review of a decision pursuant to ss. 227.25 and 227.16, Stats., you have 30 days after service of the decision to file our petition for review. The respondent in an action for judicial review is the Department of Natural Resources. You may wish to seek legal counsel to determine your specific legal rights to challenge a decision. This notice is provided pursuant to s. 227.11(2), Stats.